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JAPAN'S ACTS IN CHINA

BY K. K. KAWAKAMI

IN the fall of 1915 I published in a New York review an article advancing the view that Japan committed a diplomatic blunder in declaring war upon the Central Powers at the very beginning of the great conflict. From the point of view of military strategy, that move was unquestionably a good stroke. Viewed in the light of diplomacy, however, it was a serious mistake, calculated to raise many obstacles in Japan's own way.

When the conflagration started in Europe, England lost no time in inviting Japan to declare war upon Germany. On August 3, 1914, the day before England entered into the conflict, Sir Conyngham Greene, the British Ambassador to Tokyo, asked Baron Kato, the Japanese Foreign Minister, whether his Government could count upon Japan's aid in safeguarding British interests in the Far East. On August 7, Sir Conyngham had another interview with Baron Kato, and told the latter that his country was desirous of Japan's immediate entrance into the war. On August 15, Japan accordingly delivered an ultimatum to Germany which was followed, on August 23, by a declaration of war.

In taking this measure, Japan acted in perfect conformity with the treaty of alliance with England, though she was partly actuated by a desire to remove German menace from the Far East. Viewed in this light, Japan's entrance into the war was not only irreproachable but commendable.

And yet the moment Japan began to play a role in the war, she encountered a storm of criticisms in foreign countries, especially America and England. At bottom these criticisms were naught but an echo of the familiar cry of

the "Yellow Peril," an ingenious invention of the Kaiser. To the Western peoples the war was a "White Men's War," in which the yellow race had no place. In America the tone of the press was so averse to the Japanese campaign against Kiauchow that the sympathizers of Germany openly contended that the tide of public opinion turned in Germany's favor as soon as England induced Japan to enter the war. Even in England, severe censure was directed against Downing Street for having solicited Japanese aid.

There is reason to believe that even Downing Street viewed with apprehension, at first at least, Japan's military operations against the German territory in China. Intimations to that effect were not lacking in the press of both Japan and England. That the British Government solicited Japanese cooperation goes without saying, but it is doubtful whether it extended its hearty endorsement to Japan's plan to capture Kiauchow. Still unable to foresee the gravity of the situation that was in store for her, England, it is quite conceivable, was not enthusiastic over the Japanese plan, which she feared might have the effect of extending Japanese influence in China. Be that as it may, it was rumored in Tokyo in that fateful August of 1914 that Downing Street asked Japan to employ only her men-of-war for the maintenance of peace in Chinese waters, especially in the neighborhood of Hongkong and the straits settlement. From the strategical point of view, this proposal was impracticable. Even a novice in military affairs should know that it was impossible for Japan to maintain peace in the Far East, when Germany was permitted to maintain at Kiauchow a splendid base for military and naval operation.

The outbreak of the war in the summer of 1914 found Germany strongly entrenched in China. Kiauchow, her territory in China, was not only a base of political and commercial operation, but also a formidable military and naval base, its fortifications garrisoned by 4,000 men trained in the Prussian school, its land-locked bay capable of harboring a large fleet of warships. Assisted by the Shantung railway, the German power and influence symbolized in this base extended far into the interior. Even as early as 1907, the far-reaching significance of this German territory was forecast by an English authority in these words:

For the German programme (in China) is as clear as the light of day. In a few years another naval base somewhere in the region of Swatow will be required, and then, linked by a system of German railways, a huge slice of Northern, Central, and Southern China will be practically ruled from Berlin. It may seem nebulous and vague to those who sit in the darkness of blissful ignorance far away, but it is patent to those whose business it is to follow audacious Empire plans. Tientsin will mark the extreme Northern limit of these ambitions; Kaifengfu the Northwestern; Hankow the Central West; and Swatow the extreme South. Including, therefore, great portions of nine or ten provinces of China, the German programme is so framed that it clashes directly with no other Power in the world excepting England.

Between the time the above warning was voiced and the outbreak of the war, seven years intervened. In that interval German prestige in China made signal strides. When, therefore, the curtain rose upon the horrible scene in Europe, Germany was well prepared to impress China with the greatness of her prowess and influence.

Now let us glance at China's internal condition at the beginning of the war. The revolution of 1911 had brought in its train a state of chaos throughout the country. The republican regime, which was to have dawned in its wake, had proven a farce. The ambitious Yuan Shi-kai had, in November, 1913, resorted to a *coup d'etat*, and made himself a dictator. This high-handed measure only added fuel to the fire of internal dissension.

German diplomats and propagandists took advantage of this unstable condition, and did everything to keep Yuan Shi-kai on their side. Himself a dictator coveting imperial glories, Yuan was well disposed to lend ear to the flatteries, entreaties, cajolings and arguments of German agents. Had Japan failed promptly to throw the weight of her army and navy on the British side of the scale, there was no doubt but that Yuan Shi-kai would have been coaxed to maintain friendly relations with the Germans. The brilliant successes of German arms in the first stage of the war impressed him and other Chinese statesmen so profoundly that they had no heart to fall out with the Kaiser.

Had Japan decided to remain neutral in the first year or two of the war, it was more than conceivable that the Germans would have induced the Chinese Government to

declare war upon the Entente Powers. In the state of disorganization in which China found herself at that time, who can say that such a turn of events was impossible? In the meantime, German cruisers and submarines, with Kiauchow Bay as their base, would have, with impunity, marauded in the Pacific and Indian oceans, making it well-nigh impossible to transport Australian and Indian forces to the various fronts of war. With Japan declining to enter into the conflict at the first flush of battle in Europe, Russia, France and England would have each had to keep large forces in Eastern Asia and to maintain a strong fleet in Eastern waters. With the situation thus developing favorably to Germany, at least in the early periods of the war, China might have irrevocably cast her fortune with the Central Powers.

To a keen observer, it was patent that such developments were in store for the Far East. Had Japan waited a little, the time would surely have arrived when the Entente Powers would implore her to take care of the Eastern situation, without the slightest disposition to impose restrictions upon her activities. Had Japan entered into the war at such a stage, her task would, of course, have been much harder, for the German position in the Far East, aided by China, would have become much stronger. But Japan would have been backed wholeheartedly by public opinion in Europe and America, and no one, but the Germans, would have raised the cry of the "Yellow Peril." Under such circumstances, affairs in Shantung and South Manchuria would have been adjusted favorably to Japan without recourse on her part to such objectionable means as the "Twenty-one Demands" which created a furor in America and England. Japan, nearsighted and tactless, did not wait for the psychological moment that was bound to come her way, but hopped into the war almost at the first roar of cannon, thus inviting the suspicion and fear which she did not deserve. The troubles and difficulties which Japan has since had to contend within China are mainly due to this hasty action—an action which, though right and necessary, failed to be fully appreciated even by her ally, let alone prejudiced critics in other countries.

Due to her premature entrance into the war, Japan's

military operations against Kiauchow provoked many adverse criticisms, some of them obviously petty. The first contingent of the Japanese expeditionary force landed at Lungkow, about 150 miles north of Tsingtao, and outside the German leased territory. This move, apparently in violation of Chinese neutrality, was inevitable and justifiable from geographical and strategical considerations, and was agreed upon between the Japanese and the British commanders. Laoshan Bay, another landing point, is in the leased territory. Here the Japanese disembarked on September 18, followed five days later by the British contingent. He talks without sense who insinuates that the British observed China's neutrality, while the Japanese, without British concurrence, violated it.

It must be observed that in addition to the leased territory, 200 square miles in area, China conceded to Germany a sort of military right over a zone of fifty kilometers surrounding the Bay of Kiauchow. In this zone China agreed to "permit the free passage of German troops at any time, and to abstain from taking any measures, or issuing any ordinances, without the previous consent of the German Government."

This concession created a condition making it extremely difficult for China to maintain strict neutrality against possible belligerent acts on the part of Germany, not only in the fifty kilometer zone but in the regions contiguous to it. The Japanese and British commanders agreed that, in order to secure the landing of troops within the leased territory, the hinterland must first be cleared.

Previous to the landing of Japanese troops at Lungkow, the Foreign Office at Peking unmistakably intimated to the Japanese Legation that, while it might formally protest against the violation of Chinese neutrality resulting from that landing, such protests would be made not for the purpose of obstructing Japan's effective military operations, but with a view to absolving itself from all responsibility to Germany. In other words, China, in order to forestall German pressure, publicly protested against Japan, but in reality she endorsed the steps taken by the Japanese and British commanders. To emphasize that endorsement the Chinese Government had notified the Japanese Government that, in order to facilitate Japan's military operations,

all Chinese troops would be withdrawn from the region adjoining the landing point.

It has been asserted that, when Japan was about to send an armed expedition to Kiauchow, the Chinese Government expressed a desire to participate in the contemplated action. I can conclusively state that the Japanese Government never received at that time any communication from the Peking Government on this matter.

It is true that in November, 1915, President Yuan Shi-kai wished to enter into the war. A year had elapsed after the reduction of Kiauchow; Japan had broken German power in China; her navy, in cooperation with British fleets, had cleared the Pacific and Indian oceans of German men-of-war; while in Europe it had become evident that German arms could not have their own way. So the astute Chinese dictator felt sure that, by joining the Entente Powers at that stage, he would run no risk, but could drive a good bargain. By the *coup d'état* of November, 1913, he had practically put an end to the republic; by entering into the war he had hoped to secure the endorsement of the Entente Powers for his scheme to restore an imperial regime, crowning himself as emperor.

With this end in view, Yuan Shi-kai secretly conferred with England, France and Italy, and virtually secured their consent. But Japan could not see her way to endorse this plan, as she was convinced that the restoration of the imperial regime would plunge the country into the most deplorable state of political chaos. China had for five years been suffering from a continuous state of internal dissension. To allow Yuan Shi-kai to enthrone himself at the price of his entrance into the war was to inflict a greater misery upon the already suffering multitude, while the Allies would derive no material benefit from China's declaration of war which could be aught but nominal. The correctness of this Japanese interpretation of China's internal political situation has been fully proved by the events which have developed since China's entrance into the war in the summer of 1917, as we shall presently see.

Towards the end of 1916 the political situation in China changed considerably. The imperialistic Yuan Shi-kai had died in June of that year, and the danger of China's internal trouble arising out of an attempt to restore

an imperial government apparently ceased to exist. The provisional constitution suspended by Yuan Shi-kai had again come into effect, and the parliament suppressed by the dictator had reassembled in Peking. Moreover, the United States, in the early spring of 1917, severed diplomatic relations with Germany and advised China to follow suit. In view of the changed political conditions in China, Japan entertained no objection to China's entrance into the war at that time. On the contrary she, along with her ally and associates, advised China to declare war upon Germany.

But the moment the Cabinet at Peking took steps in that direction, the threatening cloud of internal dissension descended upon the agitated scene, to be soon followed by the storm of revolt and uprising. The turmoil in Peking in the summer of 1917, and the revolt, which is still harrassing the Southern provinces, were directly caused by the war measure adopted by the Peking Cabinet in accordance with the advice tendered by the Entente Powers, including Japan. One cannot help thinking that China might have been better off had Japan stood firm upon her original ground and exercised her influence against China's entrance into the war, which was certain to add impetus to the chronic revolt in the South.

Fortunately or unfortunately for China, Japan, in the beginning of 1917 altered her attitude toward China's proposed declaration of war. Let those Americans, who have been beguiled by insidious Chinese propaganda, read an illuminating analysis of China's domestic politics in an article written by a Chinese statesman, Mr. Liang Chi-chao, who has filled various Cabinet positions. The article was originally published in Chinese newspapers, and was translated into English by the *Japan Advertiser*, an American paper in Tokyo, as follows:

I urged Premier Tuan to lose no time in following the example set by America, and I am glad to say now that the Prime Minister accepted all my views, and treated me as an intimate friend. On account of this, the so-called "heroes" of the people's party (meaning Southern Republicans) treated me as their enemy, and all sorts of rumors were circulated against me, because at that time the dispute between the Presidential office and the Cabinet was very intense, and both sides wanted to get my views to support their own opinions in this important national affair.

When I was in Peking, I received representatives of the various

legations and prominent members of the two Houses of Parliament, and I did my best to assist Premier Tuan to put through his decision. Fortunately the bill, favoring the severance of diplomatic relations with the central powers, passed through Parliament by a majority; but unfortunately, on account of the continued disputes between the Presidential Office and the Cabinet, Tang Shaoyi and Kang Yu-wei strongly opposed the bill declaring war on Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The followers of these so-called "heroes" of China used very offensive language against me, while Mr. Kang Yu-wei called me a madman who would be executed in Peking after the entry of the German army in the capital of China through Siberia!

General Hsu Shu-Chen, who was the most trusted supporter of Premier Tuan at that moment, also expressed his disbelief in the wisdom of China's declaration of war on Germany; but as Premier Tuan was a man of principle and decision, who never wavers once he has formed his own policy in state matters, he did not lend his ear to Hsu's words. The chief reason of the subsequent great upheaval in Chinese politics was due chiefly to the fact that on account of his honesty and simple-mindedness, President Li Yuan-Hung was utilized by the members of Kuomintang Party (Southern Republicans) in the two Houses of Parliament as their tool in opposing the policy of the Cabinet. The best weapons used by the Kuomintang politicians against the declaration of war were that the United States would never dare to go to war with Germany, that Russia must sign a separate peace with Germany, that the German army would occupy Paris within one month and that England would be starved by German submarines into capitulation.

Just at this time, the Russian Revolution broke out, so that, those who first favored war with Germany became so alarmed and frightened that they changed their own belief and opposed the war bill. Especially was this the attitude of those Kuomintang Cabinet Ministers, who quoted many precedents in which countries severed diplomatic relations without declaring war.

It is highly regrettable that certain propagandists, in their zeal to serve China, have been following reprehensible methods. From Paris, where they turned heaven and earth to put Japan in a hole, have come grotesque reports to the effect that Japan, in November, 1918, entered into a secret understanding with Germany; that in 1915 Viscount Ishii, then Foreign Minister, told the representatives of certain foreign Powers that Japan could not view without uneasiness "a moral awakening of 400,000,000 Chinese". From Paris, also, has come the report that certain diplomatic documents belonging to the Chinese Peace Delegation were stolen by Japanese agents. These insinuations require no refutation. Their absurdity is their own refutation.

The interpretation of the Lansing-Ishii note has of late been a topic of much discussion. The salient part of that note reads:

The United States and Japan recognize that territorial propinquity creates special relations between countries, and consequently, the Government of the United States recognizes that Japan has special interest in China, particularly in the part in which her possessions are continuous.

The significance or insignificance of this note hinges upon the interpretation of the phrase "special interest." I do not know, perhaps no one knows, what that phrase means. If it simply means that Japan and China have special geographical relations, the note is the most ridiculous and meaningless diplomatic document that has ever been written, because it states a physical condition which requires no explanation. I cannot believe that diplomats of Mr. Lansing's and Viscount Ishii's acumen would deliberately sit down and ceremoniously sign a note which meant nothing.

However that may be, the fact must be made clear to the American public that the Japanese Government has never taken advantage of the ambiguity of the phraseology, and never attempted to read into it a meaning contrary to the intentions of the signatories. The Japanese, or rather Chinese, characters used in the Japanese text of the note to denote the phrase "special interest" read "Toku-Shu-no-Riken." Even a high school boy knows that these characters do not mean "vested interest", or "paramount influence", or "proprietaryship" or "suzerainty". Their correct and recognized translation is "special interest." I would advise Americans, who essay to discuss this matter, to study the Japanese language before they bring absurd charges against the Japanese Government. When they declare that Japan "tricked the State Department by publishing the agreement (Lansing-Ishii) in Peking in the Chinese press before the time agreed upon to have it given out simultaneously in Tokio and Washington"—when they make such statements, they deceive themselves as well as the public. The source of information for the Chinese press was the American Legation at Peking, which probably thought it proper to warn the Chinese of what was forthcoming from Ishii's visit to America.

In his recent statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary Lansing tells us that Viscount Ishii, during his visit in Washington as special Envoy, suggested to him that "there should be a Monroe Doctrine for the Far East." If Ishii made such a suggestion he did not know what he was talking about. A Monroe Doctrine could be proclaimed and enforced only by a great and powerful nation such as the United States. It is preposterous for such a small and resourceless nation as Japan to emulate America and adopt an Eastern counterpart of President Monroe's famous doctrine, because such a doctrine is effective only when backed by the prestige, influence, economic resources, and perhaps military power, actual or potential, of a great country. It would, of course, be a good thing to have a Monroe Doctrine in the Far East, but Japan certainly is in no position to enforce such a Doctrine. Furthermore, the international relations of China have become so complicated that it seems no longer practicable to apply such a doctrine to that country. Ever since China opened her doors, her territory has been regarded as a "happy hunting ground" by foreign Powers. Her inefficiency, her impotency, and the general disorganization of her administrative system have been such as to invite a veritable scramble for concessions and territories on the part of interested Powers. This regrettable state of affairs had been prevailing for several decades before little Japan awakened at the eleventh hour. By the time Japan became a factor to be reckoned with in the adjustment of Eastern affairs, the Western Powers had already firmly entrenched themselves in China, obtaining territories, and establishing spheres of influence. How can a Monroe Doctrine be applied to such a country? Confronted by this condition Japan had no alternative but to play the game as the West had been playing it. In the days when the idea of the League of Nations had not dawned upon the world, it seemed certain to the Japanese that, unless they took the necessary precaution to protect her position, the whole provinces of China would sooner or later be held in the grip of Western interests. I am willing to concede that the "Twenty-one Demands," objectionable as they were, had their inception in these circumstances. If there be any similarity between the Monroe Doctrine of America and the Monroe

Doctrine that Japan may wish to adopt, the similarity must perforce be only apparent. How can it be otherwise when the foreign relations of China are so totally different from those of Central and South America.

The Monroe Doctrine of America, as applied to the Japanese, seems to have become a doctrine totally foreign to what President Monroe meant it to be. The illustrious President had in mind only the prevention of foreign political influence from establishing itself in Central and South America. In these latter days, however, the advocates of that doctrine seem to invest it with new meanings. This is especially the case when American publicists want to apply it to Japanese enterprises. It seems as though there is absolutely nothing that the Japanese can do in Mexico, for instance, without treading upon the sensitive toes of the advocates of the Monroe Doctrine. If a Japanese secures a fishing privilege along the Mexican coast, he is held to be encroaching upon the Monroe Doctrine. If a Japanese gets a mining concession there, the same principle stands ready to expel him. If a handful of Japanese farmers manage to get into Sonora or Lower California, down comes the Monroe Doctrine to denounce them. If a Japanese business firm sells arms to the Mexican Government, that is in violation of the Doctrine. What, indeed, would the Monroe Doctrine say, if a Japanese *entrepreneur* proposed to build a railway in Mexico?

On the other hand, America has more than once proposed to build railways and work mines in Manchuria. She has no hesitation in recognizing the right of her financial interests to advance funds to the Chinese Government, or build railways and exploit mineral resources in any part of China or Siberia. I believe, as do many Japanese, that Japan should encourage and welcome American enterprises on the Asian continent. Japan would be most foolish if she were to play the dog in the manger in the Orient. To the fair minded observer it would also seem peculiar that America, insisting upon her right to expand in the Orient, should put an injunction upon Japanese enterprises on this side.

True to her promise given to her associates at the Peace Congress, Japan, as soon as the Peace Treaty is ratified,

will enter into conference with China and dispose of German rights in Shantung in an equitable manner.

Japan is to return Kiauchow, the German leased territory, to China. German right over this territory was nothing less than sovereignty, for China agreed, in a treaty with Germany, to "abstain from exercising sovereignty in the ceded territory."

In restoring Kiauchow to China, Japan, in the interest of all nations, asks only one thing, namely, that the territory be open to international trade. As a corollary of this proposal Japan also desires to establish an international settlement in the city of Tsingtao. In the Chino-Japanese agreement of 1915, a Japanese settlement was to have been established in addition to an international one, but the Japanese Foreign Department declared on August 6 last, that Japan was contemplating the relinquishment of the right to establish a Japanese settlement.

The Shantung railway of 270 miles will be owned and operated, not by Japan, but by a China-Japanese joint corporation, in which China and Japan will be represented not only in capital but in personnel. Under the German regime the railway was owned exclusively by the Germans. There was no Chinese capital invested in it, and no Chinese admitted into its management. Japan proposes to reverse that condition in the interest of China.

Japan will withdraw all her troops from the railway zone and Tsingtao. After the restoration of Kiauchow to China not a single Japanese soldier will be left anywhere in Shantung. Japan will also withdraw her police force, and entrust the Chinese authorities with the policing of the railway zone.

There remains to be considered only the question of the railway loan which China contracted with Japanese bankers. In September, 1918, the Chinese Government, on its own initiative, proposed to raise a loan in Japan for the purpose of constructing two railways in Shantung province. The Japanese Government accepted this proposal, and induced a number of bankers to advance ten million dollars to the Chinese Government as the first installment of the loan. The proposal was, of course, to build Chinese, not Japanese, railways. Japan's only part in the enterprise was to induce her bankers to advance the necessary funds

to the Chinese Government. Since this agreement was made there has been organized in Paris an international consortium whose purpose is to readjust China's financial affairs. In view of this fact Japan is likely to transfer the Shantung railway loan agreement to this new international organization.

In short, Japan's interest in Shantung will be purely economic. And in maintaining economic privileges there, she imposes upon China no such conditions as were imposed by Germany, but will restore to China rights and advantages that were denied her under German rule. Japan, small in area, congested with population, devoid of natural resources, possessing no colony, yet deprived of the common freedom of emigration, finds it imperative and inevitable to solve some of her economic difficulties with the aid of the eastern section of the Asian continent, which contains vast stores of such materials as iron and coal, the lack of which has been a great impediment to the development of her industry. If it is America's will to block the way of the Japanese, even in that direction, obstruct them at every turn, and condemn Japan to a state of inanition, it should be the part of charity for her to say it in the plainest language. For the Japanese might at least be allowed the liberty of facing the future with no illusion.

K. K. KAWAKAMI.